

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY CALLS ON EPA TO MAINTAIN AIR QUALITY STANDARDS

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today called the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's proposed changes to its New Source Review rules an unacceptable retreat in protecting air quality in North Carolina and across the nation.

"The EPA is proposing to scale back important air quality regulations designed to protect public health and the environment," Easley said. "What the proposed rule changes really do is put our air quality at greater risk.

"Here in North Carolina, we have taken bold and progressive action through the Clean Smokestacks legislation to significantly reduce air emissions from our biggest stationary pollution sources," he said. "This proposed change and others being considered at the national level pose a serious threat to the overall efforts of clean air."

The New Source Review program covers the construction of new major emitting industrial facilities and existing facilities that make major modifications that significantly increase pollution emissions. The program requires that new plants and major modifications of existing plants obtain a permit before construction, which will be issued only if the new plant or major modification includes pollution control measures that reflect the best technology available.

EPA's proposed rule changes address the definition of "routine maintenance, repair and replacement," which would alter review requirements for industrial facilities undergoing modifications.

"We have serious reservations about this proposal and its potential impact on air quality in North Carolina and upwind states," Bill Ross, secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said.

"Under the existing rules, companies that make substantial changes to their facilities and/or increase emissions must undergo New Source Review and may need to upgrade their emissions controls," he said. "With the proposed changes, facilities could replace entire units in piecemeal fashion without ever addressing actual emissions increases or upgrading their controls."

As proposed, these rule modifications are not expected to interfere with specified pollution reductions, such as nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide, to be achieved at large coal-fired power plants through North Carolina's Clean Smokestacks legislation.

Ross will deliver the state's comments on the proposed rule changes today at a public hearing at the EPA building in Research Triangle Park. The hearing is one of five the agency is holding in different cities across the nation. The state's Division of Air Quality will also be submitting written technical comments on the proposed rule changes to the EPA.

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